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table out into the yard. This indicates that the souls of the dead are now leaving the house and saying good-bye to the family. After all this is over, the children gather together. They make a wooden cross, fix the lighted candles upon it, and visit one neighbor after another, singing the special chant for the event:

"Kriste Pusd, Khamvai ishgvid lungjaz quin lapkhurna endji lakhkhurin al korash metsvlabrmi lakun, jamen!"

Translated into English, this song is as follows:

"Our Lord Jesus Christ, as Thou gave peace to the soul of the seven-weeks-old child, likewise give peace to the souls of the dead of this house. Amen!"

For this service the children receive presents, mostly food.

The belief in such material needs for the dead as food and drink is also clearly indicated in the custom of the Khevsurs and Svans of a person arranging his own funeral ceremonies and feast during his lifetime.

The Svans think[53] that all expenses for funerals and commemorative services for the dead are for the benefit of deceased souls. They believe that the amount of such expenses are in proportion to God's forgiveness of the sins of the dead, for which forgiveness the grown-up people stand in greater need than the children. Therefore, the funeral expenses for the latter are usually small. It also often happens that a childless old couple, having no hope that anyone will arrange elaborate funerals for them after their death, make such preparations during their own lifetime.

The Svans also believe that the soul of the deceased continues to live in the same house for a whole year after death and has the same material needs as a living person.[54] Therefore, during this year a portion of dinner and supper, a pipe with tobacco, and brandy (*araki*) are placed in a dark corner of the room for this soul. All this is consumed afterward by the children. In the life beyond the grave the soul asks God for a better life than it had upon earth. Therefore, the commemorative services for the dead

[53] Margiani: 81.
[54] Teptsov: 60.

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769 are of great importance; they give pleasure to the souls here on earth. But if such services are not arranged, the soul becomes an enemy of the house and may send mischief. In order to prevent this, many people arrange their own commemorative services while still alive. The entire village, and sometimes even the whole community, is assembled for this occasion. The person about to die puts on his best clothes and eats and drinks as much as he can. The people cry and wail, recite his deeds, kiss his clothes, etc. . . . In a word, they do everything exactly as if it were a real funeral ceremony. The living-dead observes those who appear to be most devoted to him, with the thought that after his death his soul may bring happiness to all who love him. The ceremony ends with a general feast.

• [774] The Khevsurs also have this custom of living people arranging their own funerals, differing from the Svans in that the Khevsur is not present at his own funeral celebration, but listens to the wailing and crying of his neighbors in an adjoining room.

775 The manner of the interpretation and representation of the soul of the dead by the Georgians in general is pictured in the custom of catching the soul of a drowned person from the river, as it is practiced by the Georgians of Samursaken,[88] and with local variations in details by their neighbors, the Abkhazians.

The soul of the drowned person remains, according to popular belief among the Georgians of Samurzakan, in the river for fifteen days and roams under the water in the vicinity of the place where the tragedy occurred. The relatives of the drowned person are anxious to find someone who is a professional expert at enticing souls out of the water and catching them. For this purpose the soul-catchers take a skin bag called *guda* to the open mouth of which is affixed a silver thread, and two men drag it upstream from the banks to the middle of the river, beginning about seven hundred feet above the spot where the corpse was found. The soul-catchers have in their hands musical instruments similar to violins, and to their monotonous accompaniment they sing: "Soul, soul! Come out of the water. Soul, soul! Fly into the skin." The soul must come out of the water and enter the skin through

[88] Machavariani and Bartolomei.

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[Samurzakan]

the silver thread which is lowered into the water. The ceremony lasts until the skin will no longer swell. That means the soul is caught in the skin. Then the skin's mouth is tied with the thread and brought to the relatives of the drowned man, who, after having redeemed the soul, on the same day release it through a hole made for that purpose into the grave in order that it may be re-united with the body. More than once the soul-catchers have complained to the local justice because they did not receive the payment promised them. If the accused refused to pay on the pretense that although the soul of their relative was caught but the whole of it was not delivered to them, while the soul-catchers proved that they had delivered the entire soul, in such circumstances the wise judge, in order to satisfy both sides, would solve the case according to popular custom by forcing both sides to take the oath as to the truthfulness of their words.

This custom is especially interesting to note because of its legal character. When the swollen and tied-up skin-bag, which is supposed to contain the soul of a drowned person, is delivered by the soul-catchers to the relatives of the deceased, the latter are obliged to pay the fee fixed beforehand for the work of catching the soul. If they refuse to pay, the offended party resorts to the law of custom, according to which the justice settles the dispute.

Parallel with this custom among the Georgians of Samurzakan regarding the soul of a drowned person is a similar belief among the Georgians of the Telav District, Department of Tiflis.[56] They believe that "the souls of drowned persons are taken in possession by evil spirits, and in order to free the soul it is necessary to kill a goat on the bank of the river where he was drowned and throw the bleeding animal into the water with these words: 'Here is a goat for you; free the drowned man!'"

The funeral ceremonies which accompany the burial of a dead person and the special commemorative celebrations which are arranged at certain periods thereafter consist of customary procedures which are followed and executed by the people with minute exactness and have the same aim: to feed and comfort the dead.

[56] Stepanov: 82.

[see cahiers, p48--Analyst]

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764 The funeral customs are almost similar among all groups of Georgian Highlanders, as well as their kinsmen in the Lowlands. Only it must be noted that the Khevsurs have a special attitude toward the body of a deceased person, which they regard, as did the Hebrews of the Old Testament, as unclean. People are appointed to wash the body and bury it. They are called *narevebi*. When the dead person is a woman, the *narevebi* are girls; when it is a man, the young men perform the task. The *narevebi* are regarded as unclean for a certain period of time and are the subject of special taboos and regulations similar to those prescribed by the Mosaic laws.

All customs connected with the funeral ceremonies and the attitude of the people toward the dead person can be explained in the manner of interpretation and the beliefs which they hold about the life beyond the grave and the existence of spirits. The funeral ceremonies, a description of which we are not undertaking at present, are numerous, complicated in detail, and require such large expenditures that the grief-stricken family is seldom able to pay all the necessary expenses without heavy material losses and even financial ruin without the support of their kinsmen, which support, however, is customarily given.

776 753 On the beliefs in the existence of spirits (good and evil) is founded also the conviction of the people that every possible calamity, misfortune, sickness and death originate with these evil spirits. They are regarded not only as the cause of sickness but as the personification of illness itself, and are called *batonebi*, meaning "lords," representing the plural form of the Georgian word *batoni* (lord). They are also called *angelozebi* (angels), which is also the plural form of the word *angelozi* (angel). In this case we have the terming of spirits with names taken from the Christian religion, a frequently occurring phenomenon in the Caucasus—the mixture of Christianity with the ideas of primitive religion.

These beliefs are present among all groups of the Georgian nation. Thus, for example, the Georgians of the Thelav District, Department of Tiflis,[57] believe that "all epidemic diseases have

[57] Stepanov: 99. [see cat. 116, p 42-44 --Analyst]

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476 part of the country, but among all groups of the Georgian nation, by Highlanders and Lowlanders alike, in every manner of life, in customs connected with child-birth as well as in wedding ceremonies and funerals.

As we saw in describing the customs connected with child-birth among the Khevsurs, the woman lives in separation during the time of bearing the child. She bears the child in a specially constructed hut called *kokhi*, and all the women of the village who are in separation at that time help her to construct the hut. After the child's birth, she goes to live in the *samrevlo*, with the women in a state of menstruation. Each *samrevlo* belongs to a certain number of families, and is constructed by their mutual efforts. In different ceremonies which are prescribed by custom, during child-birth as well afterward, the relatives and neighbors take an active interest in the welfare of the mother and child, protecting them from the possible attack of evil spirits, and presenting gifts to the new-born child, etc.

During marriage ceremonies, all the relatives of the young couple take an active interest in their welfare. The relatives of the bridegroom are busy supplying him with the resources necessary to help him meet the expenses of the wedding ceremony. During the wedding celebrations, the official presentation of gifts takes place, when the names of the donors and the gifts given by them are announced before all who are assembled. This is done with the aim of reciprocal repayment in a similar case by the receiving party to the giver, so that on this occasion we have likewise reciprocal assistance—the give-and-take.

764 The custom of mutual assistance is especially manifested in
476 meeting the expenses of funeral ceremonies. Funeral ceremonies in Georgia are very complicated and require large expenses. With a few exceptions of rich people, to perform all the required procedure would be the ruin of the majority of the people, were it not for the help of kinsmen and neighbors, so that in this case also we have reciprocal assistance expressed in the give and take. Help is rendered with things of nature, such as corn, wine, etc., or with money. The name of the donor and the kind of gift presented by him are recorded on a special list. Usually, at the

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entrance door of the home of the dead man is placed a table, where a man, with a few assistants, writes down the names of the visitors and their gifts. I have observed many such occurrences in Megrelia. Everyone, with the exception of children, must register his name and give something. This is done so as to assure the donor of similar assistance if his home should be stricken with the same calamity. Everyone helping another in such a case is sure to be helped himself on a similar occasion. In the Georgian province of Guria in times past the villagers brought to the families stricken with death,—flour, cheese, wine, beans, and in more recent times, with the stabilization of monetary system in Georgia, money was given, which consisted of from ten to thirty kopeks given by neighbors, and from one to ten rubles by relatives. Here also, as in Megrelia, the names and gifts are recorded on a special list. The monetary offering is called in Guria *tsasaburavi,* meaning "covering," or "for covering." On the other hand, the help with things of nature, as mentioned, is called *shesatseri,* meaning "offering."[24] The custom of reciprocal help in such cases is regarded by the Georgians of Guria as obligatory, and if anyone, for example in the district of Lanchkuti, did not fulfill this requirement, he was regarded with distrust by everyone.[25] In the same way as among the Georgians of Guria and Megrelia, the custom of mutual assistance is practiced by other groups of the Georgian nation. Among the Georgians of Ratcha, for example, the family of the deceased is given an offering called *shesatseravi,* consisting of from twenty pounds to two puds of corn for bread, or from twenty-seven to forty-five loaves of baked bread. Others bring wine, beans, etc. The relatives help with money, everyone giving from forty kopeks to two rubles. This monetary help is called *sapeni.* The name of the donor and the gift are recorded, as among the Georgians of Guria and Megrelia.

Among the Khevsurs, during the annual commemoration of the dead, all relatives of the deceased come together, even from the outlying villages, and everyone brings a quantity of brandy, consisting of two or three *thungi,* the equivalent of from ten to

[24] Mamaladze: 83.
[25] Keresclidze: 236.

C. G. [713] Some had the sign of the cross upon their shields, so that they looked exactly like medieval European knights and Crusaders.

C. G. 164 171 Up in the country of the Khevsurs a few very ancient churches can be found; near these, often isolated, stand some typically Khevsurian tomb structures or burial chapels unique in the Caucasus. Funeral ceremonies held by the Khevsurs are (or were ?) often accompanied by horse races, an ancient custom of horse-breeding nomads of the steppes. (This custom is reminiscent of the "dokhia" [δόχια] of some Turkic tribes in the plains near the Altai, described by the Byzantine envoy Menandros Protector, who was sent in 568 to the Great-Khan of the Türküt in the Altai region, a territory which is now part of northwestern Mongolia.) Perhaps the Khevsurs borrowed this custom from the Alans, the nomadic ancestors of the present-day Oset'i.

S'vanet'ians

C. G. 162 101 Another K'art'velian group which in its mountainous seclusion has preserved numerous ancient customs and traditions is the Svans (or Shvan, Strabon's Soanes [Σοάνες]), who live in the high valleys of the Ingur and Ts'khenis-Tskhali, just south of the central high massifs of the Caucasus, between Gvandra and Shkhara. Their language is the most archaic of all the K'art'velian tongues. The Svans are

C. G. [141] outstanding for their height; two meters is not rare.